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ABSTRACT

In this sixth report in a series about cultivating excellence in education for the purpose of training and retraining school leaders of the 1990s, nine major issues involved with revision of teacher evaluation in New Hampshire are outlined and described. After the issues are identified, a source is cited for obtaining journal articles, book chapters, questionnaires, sample forms, and examples of teacher evaluation plans. Initiating the revision process is the focus of the first issue. Issue 2 describes the purposes of teacher education. Issue 3 discusses teacher and administrator involvement in teacher evaluation. Issue 4 centers on developing a set of agreed-upon characteristics of effective teaching. Issue 5 is concerned with the evaluation process' success in achieving the goals of the evaluation; these goals should be realistically attainable with the resources available. Sources of data that a school district can use in the teacher evaluation process are listed in the sixth issue. Issue 7 discusses the validity and reliability of the evaluation process. Issue 8 concerns who should participate in training sessions. The reexamination and revision of the evaluation plan is the focus of the final issue. (JAM)

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Teacher Evaluation in New Hampshire:
A Resource Guide for Administrators and Teacher Evaluation Committees

Teacher Evaluation in New Hampshire
Resource Materials

This project was undertaken to provide school districts in New Hampshire with resource materials that will help them revise current or develop new teacher evaluation plans. This document will outline some of the major issues that a committee responsible for the revision process will want to explore and debate. After the issues are identified the reader is referred to appendices that include articles from journals, book chapters, questionnaires, sample forms, and examples of teacher evaluation plans from New Hampshire SAU's. Since the volume of information is extensive, complete copies of the appendices will be housed in the office of the New Hampshire School Administrators Association at the University of New Hampshire Center for Educational Field Services in Morrill Hall. Permission has been received from each of the publishers to reproduce the articles for this purpose. Should you want to make additional copies for distribution, I strongly suggest that you contact the publishers to receive their permission to do so.

For the past ten years I have been involved in the area of teacher evaluation as a researcher and as a consultant to school districts. Based on my experiences, the nine issues presented in this paper are important for school districts to consider when revising or developing their plans. It does not cover every issue that can and will arise in the revision process. Hopefully, it will provide your committee with a good start.

The nine issues are based upon some certain beliefs that I have regarding the teacher evaluation process. These beliefs are:

(a) The district teacher evaluation plan should be cooperatively developed with input from school administrators, school board members, experts in the field of teacher evaluation and most importantly teachers from the elementary, middle/junior high and high school level.

(b) The plan that evolves should compliment the school district philosophy

(c) The plan must be realistic given the resources available

(d) The main focus should be on the improvement of instruction in the district.

(e) The plan should be based on the most current knowledge in the field of effective instruction.

(f) The process of developing the plan can be one of the most valuable professional development activities that teachers and administrators will experience in their career.

Issue 1- Initiating the Revision Process

Before the revision process begins, it is important that the school board and school superintendent agree that revising the plan is a district priority and that sufficient resources are allocated to ensure that a thorough job is completed. Resources include both time and money.

A school district can count on spending up to two school years revising their plan. The work involved is extensive and cannot be finished by depending solely on after school meetings (unless the district wants the process to drag on for three to four years). In order to keep the process moving the district should consider providing substitute coverage so the revision committee is able to meet for full days on a regular basis throughout the school year. An alternative approach is to provide stipends for concentrated periods of time over the summer for committee work. In addition to providing time it is also important to assign professional secretarial assistance to the committee for preparing drafts and for taking detailed minutes at all meetings.

The committee that revises the evaluation plan should be comprised of representatives from the following: central office administration, building principals, school boards, and teachers from the elementary, middle/junior high and high school levels . If possible, at least one of the teachers should be actively involved or

respected by the local teachers association. Otherwise the local teachers association should be asked to appoint someone to the committee. It is also strongly recommended that this committee retain the services of a person from outside the district who is an expert in the field of teacher evaluation to guide the revision process for the following reasons:

(a) An outside expert is important to provide advice that is not biased by school district politics, history, or influence from special interest groups

(b) There are a number of technical aspects to developing a valid and reliable evaluation plan that a person knowledgeable in these areas can address.

(c) The revision process, if done properly, often takes two years to complete. Members of the committee spend a great deal of time and effort to make sure an appropriate plan is developed, which often leads to frustration on the committee's part. The outside consultant is paid to keep the group on task and often is able to streamline the process without sacrificing quality.

(d) Since each plan is unique, a consultant that works with the development of the plan is prepared to design follow-up training of teachers and administrators which is critical for successful implementation.

Once the committee is established, it is recommended that the members read one of the several textbooks on teacher evaluation and supervision that are identified at the end of this overview. Books that are particularly helpful in the authors opinion are identified with an asterisk (*). Additional articles which may be helpful, but are not included in the appendices are also listed at the end of this document in the reference section. These articles are available in the University of New Hampshire library.

Issue 2 - Purposes of Teacher Evaluation

The first step in the development of an effective teacher evaluation plan is to clearly establish the purpose(s) of the plan. If the district wants to focus strictly on the

improvement of instruction than the plan can take many forms and can be highly individualized. On the other hand, if the plan is used to make judgements that will be used to award merit pay, retain or release teachers, or judge the competence of a teacher it must be externally defensible and provide structured, documented evidence which will allow the evaluator to make fair and consistent judgements. Some plans hope to accomplish both purposes and must be designed accordingly. Materials that the committee should review include overviews of other school district plans (Appendix I), legal concerns (Appendix D), and general issues regarding teacher evaluation (Appendix A).

Issue 3 - Teacher and Administrator Involvement

At all points in the process of developing a meaningful plan involvement of teachers and administrators outside the committee is critical. One way to initiate this involvement is to either use written surveys or hold focus groups with both teachers and administrators before the revision process starts. An example of a valid and reliable survey to determine teacher evaluation needs is included in Appendix C. The Teacher Evaluation Needs Identification Survey is copyrighted and you must receive permission from the author (Edward F. Iwanicki at the University of Connecticut, 249 Glenbrook Road, Storrs, Conn. 06268) to use it in your district.

An alternative to surveys are small meetings with teachers and administrators that focus on specific issues and directed by members of the revision committee. A focus meeting should start with a discussion of what an ideal teacher evaluation plan would look like if there were no restraints. These meetings should occur in small groups and should take place at all schools in the district.

The feedback from these groups will be valuable for establishing the purposes of evaluation and for the design of the plan. It is important to keep all groups informed of the progress of the committee as the plan develops. A good time to go back to

teachers and administrators is after the draft document that outlines the characteristics of effective teaching has been completed.

Issue 4 - Developing a Set of Agreed Upon Characteristics of Effective Teaching

Once the committee has a clear set vision of what the plan they design will accomplish, they need to turn their attention to establishing a set of characteristics that all groups agree are components of good teaching. These criteria can be generated by faculty and administrator surveys, a review of research on effective teaching practices (Appendix B), state evaluation standards, and lists other school districts have compiled (Appendix E). A particularly informative book in this area is the Standards for the Evaluation of Educational Personnel, listed in the book reference section of this document.

The criteria for effective teaching are an important component of any evaluation plan and can be used in many ways. Some districts can use them to facilitate goal setting while others can use them as items that comprise the summative evaluation form. It is important to understand that the discussion among faculty members and administrators regarding what they value in teaching is a very important professional development activity in itself. Normally, the creation of this set of criteria takes a school year to develop and revise. Good examples of final sets of criteria that have been cooperatively developed are included in the evaluation plans from SAU 18 , SAU 55 , and SAU 41 , in Appendix I. You will note that these criteria are used for different purposes to reflect the purposes of evaluation as stated in their documents.

Issue 5 - The Process Must Achieve the Purposes of the Evaluation and be Attainable with the Resources Available

The process of evaluation must be clearly documented so that everyone in the district can understand the criteria by which they will be judged and the procedures that will be used to make judgements. The process section of an evaluation plan must describe the design, define important terms, present an overview of the timeline when certain aspects occur, and identify the responsibilities of the evaluator and evaluatee.

A major part of the process section of the plan should describe how the criteria for effective teaching will be used. It should also define the means by which information will be collected to make judgements regarding the criteria. Examples of evaluations that incorporate different processes are discussed in Appendix A and G. Examining the plans of other districts (Appendix I) is also helpful in this area.

Issue 6 - Sources of data that a district can use in the teacher evaluation process.

There are many different approaches to gathering data to evaluate teaching. Appendix G provides information that describes the use of each of the following options.

-formal classroom observation

-informal observation daily if possible

-review of teacher record keeping system

-review of lesson planning

-review of home school contacts

-review of student work products

-review of test results

-teacher self evaluation

-peer review

-parent and student interviews and questionnaires

-meetings with other staff

-school and professional staff development logs

Issue 7- Evaluation Process is Valid and Reliable

Any evaluation process is only as good as the people who are conducting the evaluation. In order for evaluation systems to work, teachers must feel that the person conducting the evaluation is as competent , if not more competent than they are. In addition to being competent the evaluator must be consistent . Once an evaluation plan is in place evaluators must use the same criteria and apply them the same way when observing different teachers. They must also strive to be consistent in the way they provide teachers with feedback from visit to visit.

Appendix F discusses issues of reliability and validity, and Appendix H identifies the characteristics of effective evaluators.

Issue 8 - All parties involved in the plan must participate in training

A common mistake of districts that develop new teacher evaluation plans is to rush implementation without educating the evaluators and evaluatees. Both need to have inservice training programs to understand the plan and practice the skills they will need to carry out their responsibilities.

Issue 9- The Evaluation plan must be constantly reexamined and revised.

Research has shown that once teacher evaluation plans are in place they are not critically evaluated on a regular basis. Plans need to be scrutinized yearly to see if new criteria for effective teaching need to be added or dropped, if evaluators are doing a competent job and to determine if the plan is achieving the purposes that it was established to do.

Summary

Teacher evaluation is one of the most important responsibilities of school administrators. It is important to remember that the process involved in revising a teacher evaluation plan can be a wonderful professional development activity. Unfortunately, school district personnel do not get the opportunity to discuss and debate what they value in teaching on a regular basis. The revision process encourages this dialogue. The resource materials that are provided in this packet share the results of research, identify concerns, and offer examples that will help this dialog turn into a productive, final product.

Appendices

A. General Readings in Teacher Evaluation

B. Research in Effective Teaching Practices

C. Identifying Teacher Evaluation Needs

D. Legal Issues

E. Developing a List of Criteria for Effective Teaching

F. Validity and Reliability

G. Data Collection

H. Competencies for Evaluators

I. Teacher Evaluation Plans from SAU's in New Hampshire

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